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Ross Fogg 9 April 2015

“It Never Was America to Me”: American Literature During the Great Depression

By

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An abstract of  
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Abstract

“It Never Was America to Me”: American Literature During the Great Depression

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This Master’s thesis examines the ways in which literature focuses on subjects pertinent to the study of the Great Depression like affirmations and disillusionment with the government’s response to widespread unemployment; destitute living conditions; loss of faith in public institutions; the concentration of power surrounding the Depression as well as concurrent class divisions; decreased valuation of the individual; portrayals and representations of race; and how the Great Depression and its literature inform current understandings of the Great Recession. The specific literature that this thesis examines includes John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath, In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men,* and *Cannery Row*. It likewise examines James Agee’s and Walker Evans’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*; Dale Maharidge’s and Michael Williamson’s *And Their Children After Them*;Richard Wright’s *12 Million Black Voices*;Ernest Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not*; Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*; poetry by Langston Hughes, William Carlos Williams, and Charles Simic; Philipp Meyer’s *American Rust*; and David Foster Wallace’s *The Pale King*. There are also many sources of historical data, literary theory and criticism ranging from original reviews of the literature presented and present-day analysis.

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**Table of Contents:**

1

Chapter 1. Introduction: Locating Great Depression Literature

Chapter 2. National Identity, Deterioration of Public Institutions, and the Legacy of *The Grapes of Wrath*

8

Chapter 3. Genre, Documentation, and Systemic Poverty in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

33

Chapter 4. The “We” Trope and Voicing the Voiceless: *12 Million Black Voices* and *To Have and Have Not*

54

Chapter 5. Great Depression Politics: Competing Ideologies in *In Dubious Battle* and Concentration of Power in *All the King’s Men*

73

Chapter 6. Depression-era Poetics of William Carlos Williams and Langston Hughes

100

Chapter 7. Complementary Great Depression Narratives in Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*

114

128

Chapter 8. Conclusion: The Great Depression and the Great Recession

142

Works Cited